UNIFORMS

OF THE

BRITISH INDIAN DEPARTMENT,

1755–1840

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The ensuing work is a culmination of historical research conducted on the uniforms worn by officers belonging to the British Indian Department, or simply the Indian Department, from its establishment in 1755 to its integration under the governor general in 1840. I am not a historian by any means, however I have extensively researched the topic, primarily through *Military Collector & Historian* issues and primary sources in the Library and Archives Canada. There has yet to be an extensive work on the uniforms of the Indian Department, owing to the relatively recent research conducted by the late historian René Chartrand and Gareth Newfield. As I am not a historian, it is necessary for the reader to verify the sources used and do their own additional research. The primary sources used are, unless otherwise stated, publicly available and digitized in university, state, national, etc. archival collections. Of course, I am very much willing to answer any inquiries via e-mail at: sugarbushb@gmail.com. I plan on updating this work if any new discoveries are made.

The first regulations concerning the uniform of the British Indian Department were not ordered until 18 November 1812, almost five months into the War of 1812. Previously, most Indian Department officers, usually being commissioned in actual regiments, wore the uniform of the regiment to which they belonged, if any at all, rather than a specific uniform specially ordered for Indian Department usage.[1] Despite this, the uniforms adopted by Indian Department officers were almost universally red coats. By the 1750's, these were sometimes embellished with gold lace edging on the collar and lapels and gold buttons, as shown in Superintendent of Indian Affairs William Johnson's portraits (see figures 1 and 2). In 1775 Superintendent Guy Johnson, the nephew and successor of William Johnson, was depicted by Benjamin West wearing a scarlet coat with white metal buttons and without any gold lace (see Figure 3). It is speculated that, during the late Revolutionary War, the fashion of dress would have shifted to a red coat with buff facings, silver lace and buttons, as the portraits of Deputy Agent Daniel Claus and Superintendent John Campbell show (see figures 4, 5, and 8).[2]

Figure 1. *Sir William Johnson*, c.1760, painting, Library and Archives Canada, C-03497.

Another American Revolutionary War officer, Lieutenant Daniel Servos, commissioned as a lieutenant in the Company of Confederated Indians commanded by Johnson in 1779, wore a scarlet coat with brass buttons, green cuffs and collar, and long tails with white turnbacks, very similar to the coat worn by Guy Johnson and his uncle William Johnson, but with gold lace omitted (see Figure 6).[3] Charles Michel de Langlade, who served as an Indian Department officer at Michilimackinac and Green Bay during the Revolutionary War, wore a scarlet coat with dark blue facings, edged with narrow white piping, plain silver buttons, short skirts, white turnbacks decorated with a dark blue heart edged with silver lace, and pockets and rear vents with white piping. The epaulettes have scarlet shoulder straps piped white and edged with silver lace and thin silver fringe (see Figure 7).

Figure 2. Benjamin West, *General Johnson Saving a Wounded French Officer from a North American Indian*, 1768, painting, Derby Museum and Art Gallery, 1937-658.

Figure 4. *Colonel Daniel Claus*, c. 1770, painting, Library and Archives Canada, C-083514.

[1] Such as those of Colonel Matthew Elliot and Captain Thomas McKee.
[2] René Chartrand, "Notes on the Uniforms of the British Indian Department," *Military Collector & Historian* 29, no. 3 (1977): 115.
[3] "Daniel Servos Coat," Narrative Threads, accessed 25 April 2026, https://www.narrativethreads.ca/explorer-explore/manteau_de_daniel_servos-daniel_servos_coat.html.

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Figure 3. Benjamin West, *Colonel Guy Johnson and Karonghyontye*, 1776, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, 1940.1.10.

Figure 5. *Colonel John Campbell*, 1785, painting, Château de Ramezay Museum, Montreal.

Figure 6. *Front and Back of the Daniel Servos Coat*, c. 1779, Niagara Historical Society and Museum, 972.901.

In September 1777 Major John Butler raised a corps of rangers from loyalist refugees at Niagara. Butler's Rangers served as a notable partisan corps alongside Indigenous allies and the Indian Department in the western theatre until disbanded in June 1784. The uniform of Butler's Rangers is rather obscure, however it likely consisted of a dark green coat with scarlet facings and a low, flat cap with a brass plate featuring the monarch's cipher encircled with the words "Butler's Rangers." While raiding the Wyoming Valley in July 1778, William Caldwell, Sr., wore a headscarf rather than an actual cap, and Walter Butler reportedly wore a gold laced hat while raiding the Mohawk Valley in October 1781 (see Figure 8).[4]

Figure 7. *Charles Michel de Langlade's Coat*, c. 1770, Neville Public Museum of Brown County, L817B.

[4] René Chartrand, *American Loyalist Troops 1775–84*, (London: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 17–19, 43–45.

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Interestingly, a photo of Butler's Rangers Sergeant Adam Vrooman's now-lost c. 1783 portrait shows him in a long-tailed green coat with light-coloured facings, presumably scarlet, a red sash with a light-coloured central stripe, a light buff waistcoat and white gaiter-trousers, and a black hat (see Figure 9).[5]

During the 1790s, a period of turmoil and constant British interventions into American Indian affairs, it was common for Indian Department officers to wear the uniform of the army or militia regiments to which they belonged while on duty or representing the Department. A portrait of Superintendent Thomas McKee, son of Alexander McKee, shows him holding a tomahawk in his uniform of the 60th Regiment of Foot; a red coat with blue facings, white metal buttons on the cuffs, lapels, and collar, the buttonholes edged with silver lace, and a single silver epaulette on the right shoulder (see Figure 10). His father, Deputy Superintendent General Alexander McKee's coat, jacket, and overalls were received in summer 1793. An alleged depiction of the elder McKee at a Detroit council in 1793 shows him in a cocked hat and a single-breasted scarlet coat with buff facings, standing collar, white waistcoat and overalls, and white or silver buttonhole lace. His military rank as colonel is signified by his pair of silver epaulettes (see Figure 11).[6]

Figure 8. Gerry Embleton, *Officer, Indian Department, c.1776–83*, and *Butler's Rangers, c.1778–84*, print, in *American Loyalist Troops 1775–84*.

Figure 9. *Adam Vrooman and Son*, 1783, photo, Niagara Historical Society.

Figure 10. *Thomas McKee*, c. 1790, painting, Windsor Museum, 1976.4.1.

A double-breasted red coat with blue facings, brass buttons, white piping, and long tails with white turnbacks was worn by Colonel Matthew Elliot, colonel of the 1st Regiment of Essex Militia and superintendent in the Indian Department.[7] The aforesaid coat was styled according to the Upper Canada

[5] René Chartrand. "Sergeant Vrooman, Butler's Rangers, c1783" *MC&H* 34, no. 4 (1982): 180–182.
[6] Thomas Duggan to Thomas McKee, Record Group 10, Volume 8, 8344–8345, Library and Archives Canada; Thomas Duggan to Thomas McKee, ibid., 8368–8369, LAC.
[7] Gareth Newfield, "Notes on British Indian Department Uniforms During the War of 1812," *MC&H* 67, no. 3 (2015): 273.

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Militia 1794 Dress Regulations, which permitted officers to provide themselves with a scarlet coat with blue facings, plain gilt buttons, a white waistcoat, and woollen or linen trousers, or breeches and leggings, and plain gold epaulettes.[8] Elliot likely received this coat in June 1806, along with the rest of the officers of the 1st Essex Militia, including McKee, and wore it while acting in the capacity of Indian Department superintendent, as on 7 June Thomas McKee wrote to his friend John Askin, informing him that: "my Uniform on the 4th gave very general satisfaction ... I can with great propriety say that the Dress is very handsome, and indeed Elegant, without being dear or extravagant ... the officers of Colonel Elliotts Battalion, as well as himself, were so much eclipsed, that they appeared perfectly ashamed of themselves." During the retreat of the British forces under Major General Henry Procter in October 1813, Elliot lost "1 Lodge d^{o}[trunk] Containing Col: Elliot's wearing apparel, Regimentals, Swords, Pistols &c. &c." among a multitude of other articles (see Figure 12).[9]

Figure 11. Possible depiction of Alexander Mckee at a Detroit council in 1793, Lewis Foy *The Great Indian Council*, 1793, watercolour and gouache, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1967.1575.

Figure 12. *Coat of Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Elliot*, c. 1806, Fort Malden National Historic Site.

[8] Circular, Navy Hall, 26 July 1794, in Ernest Cruikshank, *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe,* Vol. 2, (Toronto, ON: Ontario Historical Society, 1924), 342.
[9] Thomas McKee to John Askin, 7 June 1806, in Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The John Askin Papers*, Vol. 2, (Detroit, MI: Detroit Library Commission, 1931), 521–522; Statement of Property lost by the late Colonel Matthew Elliot and Family, at the Retreat of the Forces under Major General Proctor, when overtaken by the United States General, Harrison, at Moravian Towns on the 5th day of October 1813, 24 June 1823, RG 19, E 5 (a), Vol. 3744, File 1, Claim 260, LAC.

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On 18 November 1812 the first *known* dress regulations for the Indian Department, specifically in Upper Canada, were approved by Major General Robert Hale Sheaffe and sent in a circular to various officers, the uniform order was as follows (see figures 13 and 14):

> Major General Sheaffe having approved of the Ind Dept in Upper Canada wearing a Uniform, Dress the following will be the Dress to be worn by the respective officers,
>
> Sup[erintenden]t, Agent & Captain, Scarlet with green facing, cuff & Cape & Gold lace and one Epaulette [presumably on the right shoulder]. Uniform the same as worn by the [officers] of the line.
>
> Lieut[enan]ts, Interpr[eters] & Store Keepers, Scarlet with green facings, capes and cuffs with a gold strap on the right Shoulder.
>
> Blacksmiths, Serg[ean]ts Clothing, scarlet & green. You will see that the officers and your Interprs provide themselves with the above dress as soon as possible. Steps will be taken hereafter to provide uniform lace, buttons and epaulettes for the whole at present what can be got you will provide yourselves with.[10]

Although not universally adopted, as uniform coats may have been unavailable to some, it was necessary for officers to avoid being mistaken as American soldiers by Indigenous allies. In July 1813 Deputy Superintendent-General William Claus and some officers of the Indian Department "were provided with a couple of red coats" left with Mrs. Lawe, wife of Indian Department Lieutenant John Lawe, which was "a necessary precaution to prevent being shot by our own Indians."[11] Previously, on 23 June 1813, he bought a total of 8¼ yards of bottle green cloth and 24 large buttons from John Muirhead, possibly for clothing officers.[12] Similar needs of uniformity to avoid confusion must've been experienced by Lower Canada Indian Department officers who regularly led ad hoc corps of warriors. And it is likely

Figure 13. An interpreter in the Indian Department, although there are some slight errors in the uniform, such as the green breast piping, lack of a gold strap, and machine-woven sash, it is generally a fine depiction, Ron Volstad, *Interpreter, Indian Department, 1812-1815*, 2011, print, Canadian Department of National Defence.

Figure 14. Gerry Embleton, *Indian Department, officer*, *c. 1813–1815*, print, in *British Forces of North America 1793–1815*.

[10] Circular, Fort George, RG 8 I, Vol. 688 B, 159, LAC.
[11] Ernest Cruikshank, "Reminiscences of Colonel Claus," *Canadiana: A Collection of Canadian Notes* 1, no. 12 (1899): 185.
[12] Bill for Lieut. Col. William Claus, 23 June 1813, RG 10, Vol. 477, 171581, LAC.

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that officers of the Department adopted the same uniform as worn by Department officers in Upper Canada. Although not mentioned in regulations, headwear consisted of a round hat or bicorne.[13]

Uniquely, officers tasked with commanding bodies of Indigenous warriors often adopted elements of Indigenous dress, as to appear inconspicuous in forest warfare. In one particular case, Captain Robert Livingston joined Major General Francis de Rottenburg's Centre Division on the Niagara in August 1813 with a body of warriors recruited from the north shore of Lake Huron. Livingston's party regularly skirmished with American soldiers around Fort George but were taken prisoner on 17 August. Livingston himself was wounded four times and was discovered "affecting to be a savage" resulting in his wounds being left untreated by his captors and swarming with worms.[14] While at the head of about 50 warriors at Amherstburg in July 1812, Superintendent Thomas McKee was reportedly "dressed in *aboriginal style*."[15]

Another corps that was vastly interconnected with the Indian Department and designed to serve alongside Indigenous warriors were the Western District Rangers, more popularly known as Caldwell's Western Rangers, inspired by the success of Butler's Rangers during the American Revolutionary War. Led by Captain William Caldwell, Jr., the small and short-lived militia corps was proposed in March 1813 to consist of one or two companies recruited from the Western District in Upper Canada, though their formation and recruitment did not start until April and May 1813. The uniform was proposed by Major General Sheaffe and Brigadier General Henry Procter in their spring 1813 reports:[16]

> The Corps may be expected often to feed itself at the Enemy's expense … armed similarly to the Indians … A dark green plain Jacket, Grey Pantaloons, and a low Bucket Cap [a felt cut-down stovepipe shako without a plate, cords, or plume], quite plain, is the fittest dress … The clothing proposed in this article resembles that provided for Upper Canada by His Excellency's direction - the scarlet collar and cuff, as being perhaps too conspicuous, might be taken off and green, brown or black substituted.

However clothing for the Western Rangers, wasn't received until October or November 1813, when they evaded capture by the Americans following the British defeat at Moraviantown and joined the British Centre Division at Burlington Heights.[17] The clothing issued to the Rangers consisted of 30 green jackets, low bucket caps, and blue and grey trousers which had originally been embarked along with a supply of other militia clothing and Indian presents to Kingston. On 8 September 1813 Prevost ordered the "quantity of Indian Stores and Militia Cloathing, which was destined for this Post [Kingston]" to be sent to Major General Procter under the superintendence of Micheal Coyle (see figures 15–17).[18]

Following the reduction of the militia in the Western District during May 1814, the Western Rangers were reduced and Captain Caldwell transferred to the Indian Department, which his father had been appointed to. Command of the Western Rangers thereon fell to Captain James Askin, and by 25 May

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[13] René Chartrand, "Indian Department, Upper Canada, officers, 1812–1823," *MC&H* 72, no. 2 (2020): 168–169.
[14] Ernest Cruikshank, *The Documentary History of the Campaigns upon the Niagara Frontier in 1813* (Welland, ON: Welland Printing, 1905), pt. 3, 37–43; Hezekiah Niles, *The Weekly Register*, Vol. 4, (Baltimore, MD: Franklin Press, 1813), 419.
[15] "Journal of William K. Beall, July-August 1812," *The American Historical Review* 17, no. 4 (1912): 799.
[16] Instructions from Major General Sheaffe to Brigadier General Procter, RG 8 I, Vol. 797, 60–64, LAC; Gareth Newfield, "Notes on the Western (or Caldwell's) Rangers, 1813–1815," *MC&H* 66, no. 1 (2014): 91–95; Gareth Newfield and René Chartrand, "Canadian Units in the War of 1812 (3)," *MC&H* 61, no. 3 (2009): 176–177.
[17] Account of Indian Presents forwarded from this Post of Kingston to the Head of Lake Ontario from the 27th June to the 25th November 1813, 26 November 1813, RG 10, Vol. 477, 171688–171689, LAC.
[18] Invoice of Indian Goods destined for the Post of Kingston ordered by His Excellency the Commander of the Forces &c &c &c to be forwarded to Major General Procter, 8 September 1813, RG 10, Vol. 477, 171599, LAC; John Ferguson to William Claus, 8 September 1813, RG 10, Vol. 28, 16539, LAC.

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the Rangers were completely consolidated into Indian Department control, now only amounting to one captain, two lieutenants, two ensigns, and two sergeants.

Ensuingly, Lieutenant Francis Caldwell of the Western Rangers, and presumably the other officers and sergeants, served as volunteers in the Indian Department. Francis Caldwell assumed an Indian Department uniform, though not perfectly abiding by uniform regulations, consisting of a scarlet coat with bottle green facings fitted to mount a single gold epaulette or strap on the right shoulder. The collar, cuff, and lapel buttonholes are trimmed with gold lace, and the domed gilt buttons are identical to the pattern widely worn by militia officers, bearing the device of a crowned garter strap and the monarch's cipher encircled with the words "British Militia." The short skirts are decorated with sloped false pocket flaps and a slip of gold lace projecting horizontally from each hip button, the white turnbacks feature a gold crow's foot on a green cloth background (see Figure 18).[19]

Figure 15. Eric I. Manders, *Ranger,* print, in "Canadian Units of the War of 1812 (3)."

Figure 16. Robert Marrion, *Caldwell's Rangers*, print, 2008.

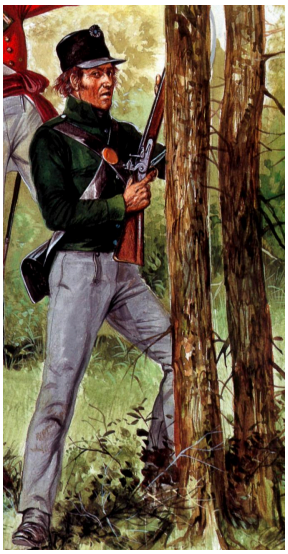

Figure 17. Gerry Embleton, *Western (or Caldwell's) Rangers, private, 1813–1814*, print, in *British Forces of North America 1793–1815*.

Captain Billy Caldwell, the illegitimate half-Wyandot son of William Caldwell Sr. also served in the Indian Department during the War of 1812. In October 1814 he purchased a scarlet coat trimmed with gold lace according to the November 1812 dress regulations decorated with two gold light infantry wings, an irregular decoration that suggests many officers didn't fully abide by the dress regulations.

1 Supr. fin. Scarlet Coat, Pattern & Trimmings-£13, 0s, 0d
1 Sabre and Belt—£13, 7s, 0d
1 pair rich gold Lt. Infy. Wings—£12, 0s, 0d
1 Silk Sash—£4, 0s, 0d
1 Pair Stockinet Overhawls [Overalls]—£5, 0s, 0d
1 Fine Silk Hnkf [Handkerchief], 1 Cottn ditto—£2, 6s, 0d
1 Watch Chain, 1 Seal—£0, 12s, 0d[20]

[19] This uniform may belong to Deputy Superintendent William Caldwell rather than Francis. Newfield, "Notes on the Western (or Caldwell's) Rangers, 1813–1815," 92, 94; Newfield, "Notes on British Indian Department Uniforms During the War of 1812," 275–276.
[20] Newfield, "Notes on British Indian Department Uniforms During the War of 1812," 275.

A reproduction Indian Department officer coat was made for the Parks Canada Fort Malden National Historic Site. It is inspired by the Francis Caldwell coat and mostly conforms to the November 1812 dress regulations. The single-breasted reproduction coat is scarlet with green Facings, white turnbacks, gold lace round the collar, and a single gold epaulette on the right shoulder. The domed gilt buttons are trimmed with gold lace (see Figure 19).[21]

The Western Indian Department was a branch of the Indian Department in the western portion of Upper Canada and, during the War of 1812, had jurisdiction over the conquered Indian country. Its posts notably included Amherstburg, Fort Mackinac, Fort McKay, St. Joseph's, and Drummond Island. For most of the war it is unlikely that officers of the Western Indian Department on the Upper Mississippi wore any uniforms aside from those in a military or militia unit, and some of the officers serving in other posts in the Department beforehand, such as Captain Livingston. After the cessation of hostilities, Lieutenant Colonel Robert McDouall, the British commandant of Fort Mackinac, endeavoured to obtain some sort of uniformity for the Indian Department officers. On 26 February 1815 he wrote to Captain Andrew Bulger informing him that he would provide uniform coats for the officers "& the Captains & Lieut's with Epaulites" in the spring.[22]

Figure 18. *Francis Caldwell's Coat and Sash*, Fort Malden NHS.

The British garrison did not vacate Fort Mackinac until 18 July 1815, relocating to the new post at Drummond Island. Officers of the Indian Department received their uniforms purchased by Lieutenant Colonel William McKay in July and August. By August, seven sashes, sabres, sword knots, belts, and four gold epaulettes which had not been issued to officers of the Western Indian Department as a consequence of the Department's reduction to a peace establishment on 10 July were given as presents to distinguished allied Indigenous chiefs (see Figure 20).[23] Officers were allowed to wear a great coat and round hat as per Indian Department Orders dated 1 December 1815, and on 30 December all officers at Drummond Island were ordered to appear in complete uniform for a New Year's Day feast in the Commissariat store house (see Figure 21).

Figure 19. *Indian Department Officer, Reproduction Coat*, Fort Malden NHS.

[21] Alex Dale, e-mail message to the author, 17 November 2025.
[22] Robert McDouall to Andrew Bulger, 26 February 1815, *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. 10, (Madison, WI: Democrat Printing Co., 1888), 92.
[23] George Crookshank to Secretary Foster, 29 July 1815, in *Michigan Historical Collections*, Vol. 16, (Lansing, MI: Robert Smith & Co., 1890), 187–188; Robert McDouall to Unknown, 25 August 1815, RG 8 I, Vol. 258, 186, LAC.

> Monday next being New Year's Day and it being customary for the Indians to receive some presents from the commanding officer in the provision way, to make the distribution more general & that every child may share in it. The Commanding officer has directed a feast to be prepared for them at 11 o'clock in the morning in the Commissariat Store House. Every officer of the [Indian] Dept. will attend at that hour in proper uniform. Lieut. Brisbois & two Interpreters will superintend arrangements & call on Capt. Anderson tomorrow for instructions. Interpreter Assenach [Assiginack] will make the Invitations & tell the Indians they must not drink till after the feast.[24]

Lieutenant Colonel William McKay, appointed deputy superintendent and agent in the Indian Department on 9 December 1814, assuming command of the Indian Department at Drummond Island, appeared in a "parade of great Pomp … being dressed in the Indian Dept. uniform & a pair of gold Epauletts as Commandant & Superint[ending] the Dept."[25] During the winter of 1815–1816 McKay was sent to Montreal to order swords, sashes, epaulettes, among other items for Indian Department officers and chiefs at Drummond Island. McKay left Montreal for Drummond Island by way of York in May 1816 and arrived at the post in June.

> I respectfully bow to His Excellencys decision, as to the few Swords Sashes and Epaulettes, which (exceedingly wanted at the time) I conceived myself authorized to purchase, by the powers before vested in me, in order to reward the faithful services of some eminent Indian chiefs whose persevering Bravery and Fidelity, enabled me to preserve this country during a most trying period of the war — there was nothing of the kind in store & my previous requisitions for these articles were immediately furnished — the Chiefs were delighted with these presents expressly given as the reward of Bravery & said that they should be transmitted to their childrens children — My personal gratitude & esteem is such, that I shall with pleasure make good one half of the expence & Lieut. Col. McKay actuated with similar sentiments, will the other. It is with feelings of unmixed regret, that this measure has not met with His Excellencys approbation—[26]

Figure 20. This portrait of the Odawa chief Mookomaanish shows him with a sabre, epaulettes, and other medals received from McDouall in 1815, *Portrait of Mookamaanish, Little Knife,* c. 1830, watercolour, Canadian War Museum, 19810296-121.

[24] Indian Department Orders, 30 December 1815, in *Michigan Historical Collections*, Vol. 16, 395.
[25] John Askin to William Claus, 5 January 1816, ibid., 416–421.
[26] Robert McDouall to the Military Secretary, 4 January 1816, RG 8 I, Vol. 260, 12–13; John Johnson to William Claus, 12 May 1816, in *Michigan Historical Collections*, Vol. 16, 454–456; Robert McDouall to the Military Secretary, 19 June 16, ibid., 469–471.

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In September 1816 McDouall, preparing to leave for Scotland, asked McKay to sit for a portrait while in Quebec in the "Uniform of the Ind[ia]n Dept" along with a series of McDouall's other military friends. His portrait, done by the artist Levi Stevens, shows him in a scarlet double-breasted coat with bottle green facings and buttons in pairs. The collar is lined red and the lapels are slightly folded back, both are trimmed with gold lace. He also wears a pair of gold epaulettes as a symbol of his army rank rather than the one epaulette allowed in the November 1812 Dress Regulations (see Figure 22).[27]

Figure 21. Charles Stadden, *Field Officer of the British Indian Department in full dress*, watercolour, Parks Canada.

Figure 22. Levi Stevens, *Colonel William McKay*, 1816, painting, McCord Stewart Museum, M17684.

The 18 November 1812 Uniform Order fell out of regularity as officers again began adopting an individual dress. Indian Department officers were noted as appearing in red coats during a November 1818 council.[28] However on 6 February 1823 Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Sir John Johnson complained of the "great want of regularity in the appearance of the Officers of the Indian Department in consequence of the Variety of Dress worn by them on Public occasions" to the military secretary. A uniform dress for the officers would invariably render "importance in the Eyes of the Indians" as suggested by Claus.

[27] Robert McDouall to William McKay, 1 September 1816, C187/A, 33, McCord Stuart Museum; Newfield, "Notes on British Indian Department Uniforms During the War of 1812," 274–275.
[28] RG 10, Vol. 489, 29470, LAC.

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Sir,

I have lately received from the Deputy Superintendent General a Communication on the subject of the great want of regularity in the appearance of the Officers of the Indian Department in consequence of the Variety of Dress worn by them on Public occasions, and suggesting that it would be advantageous if an Uniform Dress was established for the Department which would render the Officers of more importance in the Eyes of the Indians

I have frequently had occasion to notice this irregularity, and endeavoured to remedy it by directing that a particular Dress should be worn by all Officers under my Superintendence, but in consequence of there being no Order on the subject from the Commander of the Forces, my directions have been but partially complied with

As it appears to me that the adoption of Colonel Claus's suggestion would be attended with advantage, I beg leave to call your attention to the subject and if you are of the same opinion, I request you will be pleased to submit this Letter for the consideration of His Lordship the Commander of the Forces—

From the nature of the Service upon which Indians are usually employed in times of War, it is advisable that the Dress of their Officers should be of a Dark Color, and I therefore take the liberty of recommending that the following (which is already worn by some of the Department) be henceforward established as the Uniform of the Indian Department.

Jacket of Olive Green Cloth, made in the same manner as those worn by the Infantry Regiments of the Line, with Gold Lace round the Collar and Cuffs, Gilt Buttons with the Crown and name of the Department upon them.

Waistcoat and Pantaloons of the same Color.

Common Round Hat with Cockade and Button.

Broad black Leather Waist Belt, and Sabre. The Superintendent General, and Deputy Superintendent General, only, to wear a Gold Epaulette on each Shoulder.

The Interpreters, and the Clerks, not to wear any Lace on their Jackets.[29]

Johnson's suggestion was officially accepted by General Orders 27 March 1823. Further instructions by a circular on 3 April directed all officers to be in uniform supplied by Gibbs Tailors in Montreal by 23 April while on duty, for public occasions, and during divine services. Sashes and other ornaments were prohibited indicating their departmental rank rather than a military commission. The first order was amended by General Orders 17 April, that allowed superintendents to wear a gold epaulette on the right shoulder and field officers in the military to wear two epaulettes along with other badges of their rank. This change was seen as "a distinction which it would be somewhat improper to deny" by officers of the Indian Department (see Figure 23).[30] Only the 17 April General Orders are mentioned in McKay's Drummond Island register, perhaps insinuating a disregard of frontier posts for hastily obtaining a regulation dress, or rather that McKay was more concerned with his appearance as a superintendent and field officer.[31]

The Commander of the Forces has been pleased to approve of the following uniform (heretofore partially in use) as the Established Dress of the Indian Department and to be worn on such occasions as the Superintendent General may appoint, all Officers and others concerned will accordingly provide themselves with as little delay as possible.

Jacket of Olive Green Cloth made in the same manner as those worn by the Infantry Regiments of the Line with Gold Lace round the Collar & Cuffs, Gilt Buttons with the Crown, and name of the Department upon them.

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[29] John Johnson to H. C. Darling, 6 February 1823, RG 10, Vol. 493, 30428–30429, LAC.
[30] Circular, Montreal, 3 April 1823, RG 10, Vol. 15, 12147–12148, LAC; General Orders, 17 April 1823, ibid., 12161, LAC; Military Secretary to John Johnson, 17 April 1823, ibid., 12157, LAC.
[31] General Orders, 17 April 1823, C187/E, McCord Stuart Museum.

Waistcoat and Pantaloons of the same Colour, common round Hat with Cockade and Button, Broad Black Leather Waist Belt and Sabre.

The Superintendent General and Deputy Superintendent General only to wear a Gold Epaulette on each Shoulder.

The Interpreters & Clerks not to wear any Lace on their Jackets.[32]

On 27 November 1827 James Givins wrote to Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Henry Charles Darling complaining of the "latest order" for officers to wear cockades at the sides of the round hat which gave them the appearance of footmen rather than distinguished officers. He suggested that a shako or bicorne be adopted to "command a greater respect from the Indians by its more military appearance, and would distinguish the officer of the Indian Department from his servant," however this change was seemingly ignored and round hats continued in usage.[33]

The 27 March 1823 Dress Regulations and its sundry amendments continued in use until the early 1840s, as the Indian Department shifted into a civil department concerned with treaties, reserves, schooling, and welfare issues. In 1839 the uniform of the Indian Department was described as "Olive Green, and Gold Lace" although there were likely alterations to fit the contemporary British regular officer's uniforms.[34]

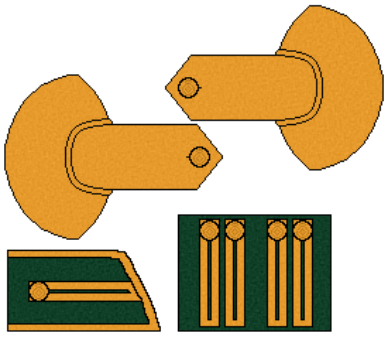
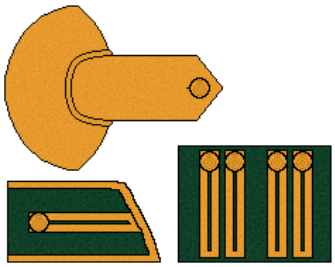
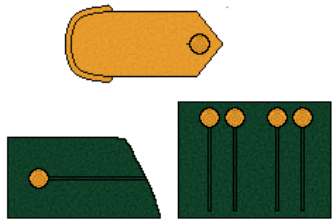
Figure 22. Charles Stadden, *Indian Department uniform, 1823 regulation*, watercolour, Parks Canada.

[32] General Orders, 27 March 1823, RG 10, Vol. 493, 30467, LAC; René Chartrand "Indian Department, Canada, Officers, 1823–1827," *MC&H* 73, no. 2 (2021): 150–151.
[33] James Givins to Henry Charles Darling, 24 November 1827, RG 10, Vol. 497, 31872–31873, LAC.
[34] Chartrand, "Indian Department, Canada, Officers, 1823–1827," 151; *The Militia Register of Upper Canada* (n.p.: 1839), 83.

CHART OF RANK DISTINCTIONS

Note that there are exceptions to both uniforms regulations, as already explained in the text, and many officers simply did not follow uniform regulations (like Francis and Billy Caldwell).

18 November 1812 Uniform Order

RANK DISTINCTION	RANK(S)	NOTES
	- Superintendent General - Deputy Superintendent General	Although not mentioned in the uniform order, it is possible that the Indian Department in Lower Canada adopted the dress of the Department in Upper Canada. Deputy Superintendent General William Claus procured red coats for himself and other officers as aforementioned and it is likely that both the superintendent general and his deputy wore two epaulettes as a sign of their military rank.
	- Superintendent - Deputy Superintendent - Agent - Captain	The specific position of the epaulette is not mentioned however it is likely it was worn on the right shoulder, like the straps of the lower grade officers, and Francis Caldwell's coat being fitted to mount an epaulette or strap on the right shoulder. Deputy superintendents wore the same uniform as a superintendent.
	- Lieutenant - Interpreter - Storekeeper	A strap was simply an epaulette without fringe, similar to those worn by American regimental staff officers. No surviving contemporary depictions or coats of this grade of officers are known to survive.

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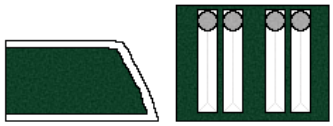
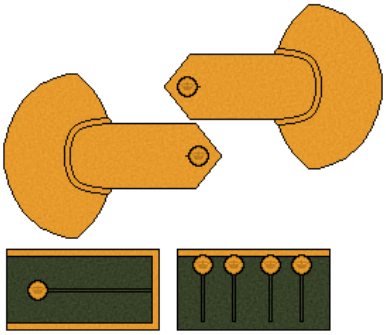
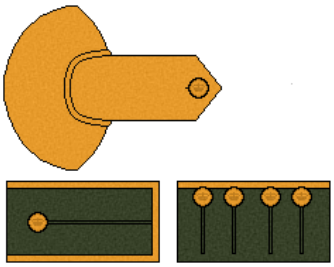
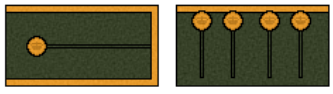
	- Blacksmith	The blacksmith's rank distinction is by far the most obscure of the ranks. Wearing "Serg[ean]ts Clothing," that is, a red coat with bottle green facings, likely similar to that received by the Upper Canadian militia in June 1814. Blacksmiths probably did not wear chevrons.

27 March 1823 General Orders

RANK DISTINCTION	RANK(S)	NOTES
	- Superintendent General - Deputy Superintendent General	It was originally suggested that only the superintendent general wear a pair of gold epaulettes, however both the superintendent general and his deputy were allowed a pair of epaulettes in the 27 March 1823 General Orders. Army field officers in the Indian Department were also allowed to wear two epaulettes.
	- Superintendent - Deputy Superintendent	The superintendent was allowed to wear an epaulette on the right shoulder by the 17 April 1823 General Orders. Like before, deputy superintendents would've worn the same uniform as superintendents.
	- Agent - Captain - Lieutenant	The remaining officers of the Indian Department were permitted to wear a jacket with gold lace round the collar and cuffs, but no epaulettes, unless they were field officers in the army.

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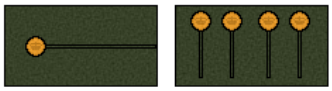	- Interpreter - Clerk	The uniform of the interpreter and clerks were much more bland than the other grades. They were not permitted to wear any gold lace or epaulettes. Only army field officers were permitted to wear a pair of epaulettes.

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